

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 7, 2004

The Honorable Conrad Burns
Chairman
Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Byron Dorgan
Ranking Member
Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member:

As you know, the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program provides payments to local communities to compensate them for losses to their tax bases that result from the presence of significant amounts of federal land in their counties. These funds are critical to the budgets of local governments, which supply many essential services such as search and rescue, law enforcement, and road maintenance.

In addition to the regular residents of our country's public land counties, millions of Americans who visit national parks, forests, and other public lands rely on county governments to provide high-quality services and a clean and safe environment. The PILT program makes this possible.

Unfortunately, the Department of the Interior's Fiscal Year (FY) 2005 budget request of \$226 million fails to provide funding sufficient for the federal government to keep its commitment to public land counties. This places an undue financial hardship on our counties, who are mandated by law to provide many critical public services.

The current authorization level for the PILT program is \$340 million. As we work to achieve full funding for PILT, we urge the Committee to provide at least \$255 million for FY 2005. We look forward to working with you to support this important program.

Sincerely,





Rick Leger

Mike Cryer

Richard Shelby

Mark Dayton

Mark Pryor

Max Baucus

John Ensign

Carl Levin

Patrick Leahy

C.H. Sisk

Jeff Bond

Maria Cantwell

Ken Ben

George Allen

Pete V. Jansen

Stephen J. Jansen

Tom Jansen

Dick Jansen

Jeff Jansen

Long Jansen

Russell J. Jansen

Tom Jansen

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Mike Jansen

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Herb Kohl

Paul Lehman

Blanche L. Linde

Jim J. Hord

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John Edwards

John Beatty

Chin D. M.

Frank Lott

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Scott Z. Bennett

Don Kuhl

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Arlen Specter (PILT)

Mary J. Swann

NGL

Barbara Roper

Elizabeth Dole

Jeanne Kirkpatrick

Samuel H. Haskins

J. Hill

Frank R. Lautenberg

Lynd H. Haskins